SNAP BENEFITS AT RISK - P4 • ZOHRAN POSTER - P10 • A MOVIE FOR OUR TIMES - P16

THE INDYPENDENT 25

#299 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

LYNNE FOSTER

ALL ABOARD

THE MAMDANI ERA BEGINS

COVERAGE STARTS PAGE 8

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THE INDYPENDENT 25

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THE INDYPENDENT 25 November/December 2025

CALENDAR 25

JONATHAN SLAFF

NOV / DEC

MON NOV 24 • 7PM • FREE
QUEER STORYTELLING
This month's edition of "Queer to Tell: A Storytelling Series" at Ginger's bar will be hosted by local drag artist Andie Sleaze and will feature six LGBTQ+ storytellers addressing the theme of holiday greetings and gay happy meetings.
GINGER'S BAR
363 5th Ave
BKLN

OPENS WED NOV 26 • 12:20PM, 2:40PM, 5:10PM, 7:30PM • $17
MOVIE: TEEN-AGE WASTELAND
A high school A/V assignment goes full-on activist when English teacher Fred Isseks sends students, armed with video recorders, on an investigative assignment to suss out the brown muck surfacing at the local dump in their upstate New York town. The toxicity they discover lives not only in the landfill, but in political corruption and environmental injustice in their community. Archival footage of their 1996 class project, "Garbage, Gangsters, and Greed," and interviews with Fred and students 30 years later weave a sobering yet buoyant and timely story about fighting the good fight as its own life-changing triumph.
FILM FORUM
213 W. Houston St
MNHTN

THU NOV 27 • 5:00PM • FREE
FREE PUBLIC DINNER
Feel the warmth of Palestinian hospitality when Ayat's Astoria restaurant serves a public dinner for those who will not be with family, or even if you will. Bring your friends, bring your family, bring whoever you love. Come with your energy and your kindness. Call it Friendsgiving, call it dinner, call it whatever you want, just come.
AYAT RESTAURANT
3325 Crescent St
Astoria, QNS

WED DEC 3–SUN DEC 7 • 8:00PM • $15–$20
THEATER: BREAD & PUPPET'S DOMESTIC REVOLUTION IN PROGRESS CIRCUS
The legendary antiwar theater troupe was founded on the Lower East Side in 1963, moved to Vermont and returns to its ancestral homeland each December. This year it's back with Anti-Empire Art that acknowledges our beloved Mother Dirt, who makes us and unmakes us, and who presents urgently needed domestic resurrection services for the victims of the latest genocide. Wed-Sun at 3 pm + Fri & Sat at 8 pm.
THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY
155 1st Ave
MNHTN

THU DEC 4 • 6:30PM • FREE
VIRTUAL PANEL: REFLECTIONS ON SNCC HISTORY
Hosted by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, this virtual event will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the publication of Charles M. Payne's groundbreaking history of the Mississippi movement, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle. Payne will be joined in conversation by SNCC veteran Charlie Cobb, radical teacher Tess Raser, and Black freedom movement historians Hasan Kwame Jeffries and Emilye Crosby. This program will be streamed live and posted on the Schomburg Center's YouTube channel.

WED DEC 10 • 6:30–8:00PM • FREE
PANEL: THE CHANGING FACE OF PROGRESSIVE BROOKLYN
Brooklyn's reputation as one of America's most progressive boroughs reflects a long history of demographic shifts, social movements, labor organizing, and vibrant urban culture. Join renowned demographer Joseph Salvo, distinguished political scientist John Mollenkopf, Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, and moderator Katie Honan of THE CITY, for a conversation about Brooklyn's evolving population and progressive identity.
CENTER FOR BROOKLYN HISTORY
128 Pierrepont St
BKLN

THU DEC 11–SUN DEC 14 8:00PM & 3:00PM • $15–20
THEATER: BREAD & PUPPET'S THE CHRISTMAS STORY
An urgently-needed retelling of the first Christmas story starring Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, King Herod, the Three Kings but remade for today's horrors and today's badly needed cry for an end to war. Thu–Sun at 3pm + Fri & Sat at 8pm.
THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY
155 1st Ave
MNHTN

SAT DEC 13 • 8:00PM • $30–$40
QUEER URBAN ORCHESTRA
Find solace, strength, and the spirit of resilience in this concert exploring the timeless search for peace and belonging. Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony, Ukrainian, pays vibrant homage to the rich folk traditions of Ukraine, a lifelong fascination the composer pursued during his extended visits to the country. QUO's very own clarinetist Johann Palo, winner of the orchestra's 2025 Concerto Competition, is the soloist in Debussy's brilliant Première rapsodie.
STEPHEN WISE FREE SYNAGOGUE
30 W 68th St
MNHTN

COUNTER-CULTURE: *Bread & Puppet will be staging two different plays in December at Theater for the New City.*

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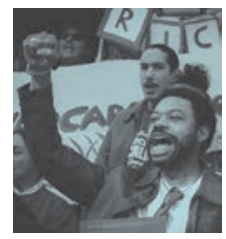

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PATHMAKERS TO PEACE

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025
6:00 - 9:00 PM

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2025 PATHMAKERS TO PEACE HONOREES

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NY-10 NEIGHBORS

139 FOR PALESTINE

GAZA CEASEFIRE

NY8 Neighbors for a Gaza Ceasefire

SCAN HERE

SNAP BACK BUT...

ONEROUS NEW WORK REQUIREMENTS SLAM MANY FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS JUST AS GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN CHAOS ENDS

ELSIE CARSON-HOLT

AGAINST HUNGER: *SNAP recipients and advocates rallied outside a Manhattan courthouse on October 30.*

By Elsie Carson-Holt

Nearly 3 million New Yorkers are enrolled in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) with the average household receiving $376 per month in benefits. Many of the SNAP recipients are children, and 21% are over the age of 60, according to research from the New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College.

During the recent 43-day shutdown of the federal government, SNAP recipients became collateral damage in the political battle between Republicans and Democrats when the Trump administration refused to use emergency funds to continue providing SNAP benefits. While the shutdown ended on Nov. 12, many New York SNAP recipients now find themselves navigating newly implemented work requirements for enrollment in the program that went into effect on Nov. 1, four months ahead of schedule.

The requirements were included in President Trump's "big, beautiful bill" that passed Congress in July and were set to begin early next year. But on Oct. 3, the federal agency that oversees SNAP announced it was terminating waivers that New York and many other states were using to work within the timeline. Officials and recipients who thought they had until the end of February to adjust or make alternative plans only had a month — the beginning of November — until the new work requirements were to be enforced.

"New York and other states had waivers of those rules because the unemployment was higher than the national average, and so those waivers had been renewed over and over again, and the latest one was due to expire at the end of February of next year," explained Ed Josephson, the Legal Aid Society attorney who argued a case for extending the waivers on Oct. 30 to no avail.

Josephson said the Legal Aid Society was hoping for an orderly process that would be able to minimize the harm done. But with 100,000 notices sent out in the last couple of weeks of October it's inevitable that people didn't receive them, or missed their appointments discussing their changed or cancelled benefits.

"We know people are going to fall through the cracks," Josephson added, "but at least if you have four months, you know there's some chance of minimizing the harm that's going to happen. [But] in 30 days, you know, it's going to be catastrophic," said Josephson.

The New York City Human Rights Administration says that 231,600 people in New York City will be affected by the new work requirements. These people fall under the criteria that they are able-bodied, do not live with a child under 14, and are not pregnant or a caretaker.

One of the major problems with this criteria, says Josephson, is that many of the people who are classified as able-bodied, "are not even remotely so."

"What happens is they have to recertify their SNAP every year. When they come in to do that, they're told, 'you're not going to be subject to these requirements; don't worry. And so they're not going to run around to doctors trying to prove that they're disabled when it doesn't matter."

These individuals have less than a month to either prove that they're disabled or comply with the work requirements, which will be hard to do. New York City's unemployment rate is 5%, and the *New York Times* reported in August that private companies in the city "all but stopped hiring" in the first part of 2025 — even able-bodied people are likely to be unable to find jobs and retain their SNAP eligibility.

Marcus, an activist in New Lots, Brooklyn and podcast host, receives SNAP benefits every month. Marcus worked doing deliveries, but said "the gig economy is not the greatest," and was homeless throughout the pandemic. He said he has experienced hunger before, and worries that with the new work requirements, he'll face hunger again.

"My [SNAP] benefits have helped me to get better and move forward where I don't have to be thinking about food, like when I was in the streets," said Marcus. "I had to be always hunting for food, or have a schedule in my pocket where I knew they were going to be serving food."

"With my benefits, I have some form of normalcy where I'm not always in a desperate mode," Marcus explained. He said that losing his benefits as a result of the work requirements "will put me back in a desperate mode. The only thing I will be able to think about is food, food, food. I can't do nothing else. I got to make sure I get food."

Marcus is against the new work requirements, "I don't see where these policies is really beneficial for low-income working poor people. It just beats up on the working people and poor people who still needs their benefits and and really don't have time to do these, these programs that that don't hire people anyway. It steals their labor from their bodies."

Eduardo lives in Manhattan, and was homeless until six months ago, when he moved into an apartment that Urban Justice Project connected him to. He receives a meager $290 per month — and said his fridge was empty for the duration of the shutdown.

Eduardo says he doesn't plan on meeting the new work requirements, and he hasn't received any word his eligibility has changed.

"Why take from the people that are already struggling and already paid for their benefits and take it from the ones that are using it?" Said Eduardo. "We are the one that build. We are the ones that plant the fruit. Why are they taking the benefits?"

Community activist Sindy Rivera, who attended a rally on Oct. 30 outside the courthouse in Lower Manhattan after a judge denied the waiver extension, told *The Indypendent* that she came out because she doesn't "think that people starving is a game to play as a political maneuver. It's sadistic; it's draconian; it's inhumane."

She herself has been homeless for the past 10 years, forced out of her home due, she said, to gentrification and credit discrimination.

NYC BRIEFS

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

ROMAN BROSZKOWSKI

GROUNDS FOR CHANGE: *Striking workers and their allies hold a picket in front of the Starbucks at 325 Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn.*

'RED CUP REBELLION' AT STARBUCKS

Workers at Starbucks coffeeshops in more than 40 cities went on strike Nov. 13, under the slogan "no contract, no coffee." Starbucks Workers United, which represents workers at about 650 of the 10,000 U.S. stores, began negotiations for a first contract in early 2024. But the company's most recent offer, last spring, was "zero increase for the first year of the contract," union spokesperson Michelle Eisen, a barista at the Buffalo store that was the first one in the country to unionize, told the Real News Network. The open-ended walkout began on "Red Cup Day," an annual promotion where stores give away red reusable cups, and numerous stores were still closed on Nov. 17. New York mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani urged residents to support it by boycotting Starbucks, and Seattle mayor-elect Katie Wilson joined that call at a union rally. "We're ready to take our power back from the hands of those that hold it all together and hoard it for themselves," striking barista Rey Saho told Work-Bites on a picket line in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill neighborhood Nov. 13. "I think if not now, when?"

TISCH WILL STAY AS POLICE COMMISSIONER

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch will stay on in mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's administration, the two announced in separate statements Nov. 19. Mamdani praised her for lowering crime and cracking down on high-level corruption in the department. Tisch, hired by Mayor Eric Adams in November 2024 after several department scandals, told officers in an email that "the reason I have chosen to stay is you," while adding that she and Mamdani don't "agree on everything." The two differ on issues such as bail reform and who has the final word on disciplining officers, but said they would work to have the department collaborate with Mamdani's proposed Department of Community Safety on handling what police term "emotionally disturbed persons." Mamdani retaining Tisch was likely a move to avert the force turning against him, as it had with former mayor Bill de Blasio. Police Benevolent Association President Patrick Hendry praised the decision.

GREEN GROUPS SUE TO BLOCK STATE'S OK OF GAS PIPELINE

Seven environmental-activist groups filed a federal lawsuit Nov. 18 to block a gas pipeline that the state Department of Environmental Conservation approved in November after rejecting it three times. The proposed Northeast Supply Enhancement pipeline would carry fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania to the Rockaways, with 17 miles under New York Harbor. The DEC denied it a permit three times between 2018 and 2020, saying it would damage shellfish habitat and stir up buried toxins such as mercury compounds and PCBs. Gov. Kathy Hochul denies that she agreed to allow the pipeline in exchange for the federal Department of Energy letting construction resume on a wind-power project off Long Island's South Shore, but both the White House and environmentalists say she did. "There is nothing factually or legally different about the pipeline now that can justify DEC's reversal," Natural Resources Defense Council lawyer Jared Knicley said in a statement.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

NYC TO ICE: GET OUT!

@LACOLMENA

ICE WATCH IN STATEN ISLAND: *Residents started an ICE Watch group after immigration agents detained a recent Port Richmond high school graduate at her warehouse job.*

By Renée Feltz

Many New Yorkers now carry a whistle to sound the alarm when they see teams of armed masked agents in fatigues and tactical gear who have started to menace the city, from Washington Heights to East Elmhurst.

Others are texting each other in groups they created on the encrypted messaging app Signal.

"I was getting notifications in our chat that ICE was knocking on doors, so we rushed over here to see what was happening," said a Bensonhurst resident, who told AMNY they saw agents abduct a woman described as a young mother with an 8-month old baby.

"ICE is a rogue agency that is lawlessly terrorizing New Yorkers," said Murad Awawdeh, President of the New York Immigration Coalition, which alerted the media when agents raided a basement apartment in Queens without a warrant, and pointed guns at a mother and her four children - all to search for a cousin who moved away years ago.

"Even the neighbors thought a burglary was in progress, and called the NYPD to investigate," Awawdeh added. "No child should ever have to be a victim of such unlawful and ruthless behavior."

Security camera footage shows NYPD officers stopped by briefly, spoke to agents on the sidewalk outside and soon left.

At his first press conference as Mayor-elect, Zohran Mamdani was asked by *Democracy Now!* for his message to ICE agents grabbing people around the city and in the hallway after immigration court hearings at 26 Federal Plaza.

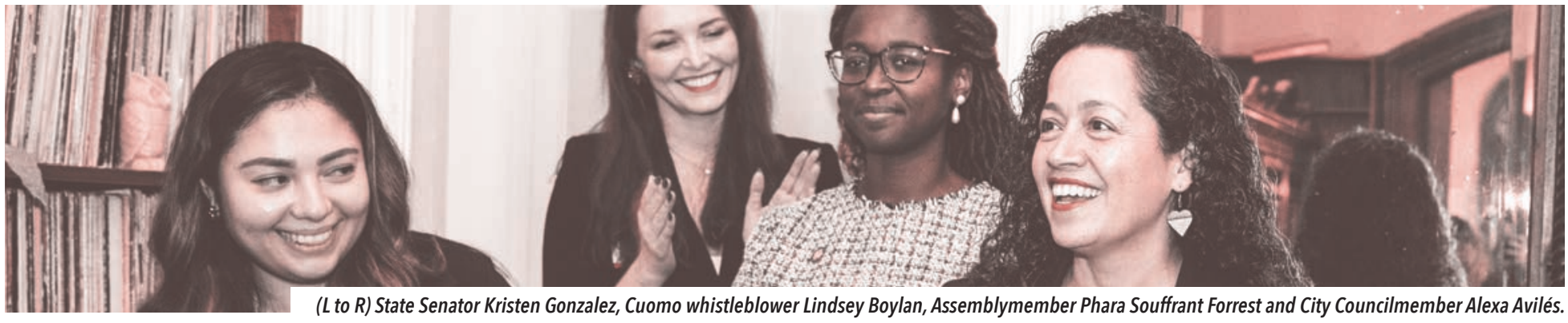
"Everyone will be held to the same standard of the law. If you violate the law, you must be held accountable," Mamdani responded, decrying the "sense that is growing across this country that certain people are allowed to violate that law, whether they be the president or whether they be the agents themselves. What New Yorkers are looking for is an era of consistency, an era of clarity, an era of conviction."

Following in the footsteps of residents outraged by the antics of federal agents deployed to Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Charlotte, New Yorkers have turned out by the hundreds for workshops on how to document and potentially turn away ICE and Border Patrol agents who raid their home, neighborhood, workplace, school or place of worship.

"We are already there now, but we will increase the enforcement presence in New York City again because they are a sanctuary city," Trump's Border Czar Tom Homan recently told Fox News, building on right-wing paranoia about the incoming mayor.

Waiting for the promised hordes of agents will be New Yorkers in all five boroughs who are organizing through websites like handsoffnyc.com.

"Today we ran an ICE Watch in Port Richmond," wrote La Colmena (The Beehive), a Staten Island community group recently shared on social media. "We were present at the same early hours ICE operates. We are training more volunteers to keep watch, as we grow, our goal is to do this daily."



(L to R) State Senator Kristen Gonzalez, Cuomo whistleblower Lindsey Boylan, Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest and City Councilmember Alexa Avilés.

Alexa Avilés presents a City Council proclamation to Indypendent *Editor-in-Chief John Tarleton.*

Reverend Billy in the house.

Indy *Associate Editor Elsie Carson-Holt (right) gets a hug.*

Legendary antiwar organizer Leslie Cagan (far left) urges support for The Indy.

Our host Nancy Romer (far right) talks with a pair of Indy supporters.

THE INDY AT 25

Text by Indypendent Staff / Photos by Chae Kihn

The Indypendent began in 2000 as a scrappy, four-page black-and-white newspaper and has since become a community institution. On October 14, scores of supporters – community organizers, activists, artists, union leaders and elected officials – gathered to celebrate the paper's 25th anniversary.

The Indy's durability was commemorated in 25th anniversary proclamations presented respectively by City Councilmember Alexa Avilés, State Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest and State Senator Kristen Gonzalez.

"The stories that are told in *The Indypendent* are the ones that matter the most and that can help fuel the bigger things that we are working toward as it brings to light new campaigns, new people and new issues," said Gonzalez, a democratic socialist who became the youngest-ever woman elected to the State Senate in 2022.

"We need publications and people who are committed to the written word," added longtime antiwar organizer Leslie Cagan. "There is nothing else quite like it because it can stay with you and you can share it with someone else, and you can go back and read it again."

On the night, we raised more than $5,000, an important first step in our year-end fundraising effort. To make a gift to *The Indy,* you can go to indypendent.org/donate or The Indypendent//388 Atlantic Ave, 2nd Fl//Brooklyn, NY 11217.

CHELSEA NYCHA RESIDENTS DIG IN AGAINST CITY'S DEMOLITION PLANS

MARNI HALASA

A NYCHA resident speaks during a Nov. 8 rally and march against the demolition of buildings at the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses.

By Ella Spitz

Public housing residents and advocates rallied on November 8 against the New York City Housing Authority's plan to have a private developer demolish and rebuild the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses, constructing new market-rate apartments on NYCHA-owned land. The Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea (FEC) Tenants Against Demolition filed a lawsuit to stop the plan in late October.

NYCHA announced in June 2023 that it planned to lease the land under the two developments—on two separate sites between West 16th Street and West 27th Drive, between Ninth and Tenth avenues—to The Related Companies and Essence Realty. Over the next 15 years, the developers would gradually tear down the public-housing buildings, which are home to 2,056 apartments, and move the residents to new buildings in the federal Section 8 program as they are completed. It would also construct about 2,500 luxury and about 1,000 so-called "affordable" apartments on the same land.

Public-housing developments have been torn down in many U.S. cities, such as St. Louis and New Orleans, over the past 40 years. New York City's public-housing system, home to an estimated 500,000 people, has been the exception. Critics of the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea demolition worry that it could set a precedent for further elimination of NYCHA units, which are by far the largest source of apartments under $1,000 a month in the city.

NYCHA in 2019 sought proposals to rehabilitate the two developments, but then claimed that its original estimate of the cost had been far too low. The authority now appears to believe that the only way to pay for its backlog of repairs, estimated at $78 billion, is by privatization partnerships that let developers build market-rate housing on its land and give it access to Section 8 funding.

Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea residents have been resisting this plan, fearing displacement. NYCHA and the developers say that in their new units, residents would continue to pay at most 30% of their income toward their rent, and that only 6% of the residents, the 111 households in the Chelsea Addition and Fulton 11 buildings, will be required to move to temporary apartments during the demolition and reconstruction process. Chelsea Addition houses only elderly people.

But the plan involves ending the residents' traditional public housing Section 9 tenancies and replacing them with Section 8 leases, in which the federal government pays the difference between 30% of the tenant's income and an amount slightly below the median market rent in the area—well over $3,000 a month in Chelsea.

Many residents are wary of the developers' promises. "I've heard the developers speak a lot, and it feels like day-to-day what the developers are promising changes a lot. I'm just at the point where I don't trust what the developers say," Simon Z., 56, a Fulton Houses resident, told the Indypendent at the Nov. 8 rally, speaking in Chinese through a translator. "I feel like if there are any issues with the project or the building in the future, it's going to be the tenants who have to bear the consequences, it's not going to be the developers."

"These are elderly tenants, low-income, disabled, very vulnerable people," neighborhood housing advocate Marni Halasa said.

DISPLACEMENT BEGINS

The displacement process began in late July, when tenants in Fulton 11—two conjoined buildings on West 19th Street—and Chelsea Addition received notices from NYCHA telling them they had to vacate their homes.

The notices stated that residents needed to leave by October 26, in 90 days, otherwise "legal action will be commenced against you, including proceedings seeking to evict you and terminate your tenancy." On October 27, NYCHA issued "termination of tenancy" notices to the Chelsea Addition residents who had not yet left.

"I am here because I am fighting for my sanctuary. My home is more than just my home. My home is where I feel safe," Chelsea Addition resident Maria Santos, 76, said during the Nov. 8 rally.

According to Ana Hall, a spokesperson for Essence, 92 out of the 111 households in the Chelsea Addition and Fulton 11 buildings have signed new leases, and have either moved or are in the process of moving.

The day after the termination of tenancy notices were issued, FEC Tenants Against Demolition, represented by TakeRoot Justice, filed a lawsuit against NYCHA, seeking a court order to halt the eviction and demolition process.

The suit argues that NYCHA is exceeding its authority, defined in the state Public Housing Law as to provide low-income housing, since the law does not detail an exception for NYCHA "to build market-rate housing on public housing land." It also says that NYCHA is skirting the city's Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP), the public review required by the city charter for "[h]ousing and urban renewal plans and projects pursuant to city, state, and federal housing laws." That review process can take at least seven months to obtain an approval.

Advocates and residents argue that, through the vendor Housing Opportunities Unlimited (HOU), residents are being coerced into vacating their homes.

In one instance, Halasa said, HOU packed a resident's belongings even though she had not agreed to vacate. (After a court hearing on the lawsuit Nov. 5, the tenants' attorney said that a family member had signed the agreement for her.) Halasa also noted that police came and told tenants that they needed to move because the building had been sold, which is not yet true.

"They don't respect anybody. They just do what they want to do," Santos said. "They've taken the directory off the building, which can cause other people to believe that no one's in the building, and puts the residents that are there in danger."

The next hearing on the lawsuit is scheduled for Dec. 4.

"The next step forward for me is to stay there all the way to the end," Santos said. "I am not moving. I am not listening to them, and if they want to move me out of there they have to take me to court."

FIGHTING DISPLACEMENT:

HOW ZOHRAN & NYC-DSA REWROTE THE SCRIPT OF AMERICAN POLITICS

PRESENT: *Zohran Mamdani speaks in April at a tenant protest in the South Bronx.*

By Partha Banerjee

When Zohran Mamdani announced his run for mayor of New York City, he was polling at one percent — a no-name state assemblymember without corporate donors or support from traditional power brokers. Yet within months, the ground shifted. And now he has won an extraordinary, historic victory.

How did this happen? What cracked the machinery of money and media that normally isolates insurgent voices?

1. THE ORGANIZATION BEHIND THE INSURGENCY

No story of Mamdani's rise can be told without naming his movement's backbone — the New York City chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. Since 2017, NYC-DSA has contested state legislative and City Council races against deep-pocketed incumbents and won seat after seat through old-fashioned, person-to-person organizing. They have built a membership-driven structure with thousands of volunteer canvassers, a massive voter database, and a culture of internal democracy that actually empowers the rank-and-file.

In an age when unions, churches, and civic organizations have withered, NYC-DSA has grown — a living rebuttal to the myth that collective action is dead. It gave Mamdani a ready base of skilled, motivated organizers and small-donor power from Day One.

2. THE FUSION: DSA + THE SECOND CIRCLE

If DSA supplied the muscle, Mamdani brought the bridge. He extended the movement's reach beyond the "Commie Corridor" — those gentrified, college-educated, renter neighborhoods — into the mosaic of working-class, immigrant, and faith-based communities that I call the Second Circle.

The Second Circle is the broad moral center of the 99 percent: delivery drivers, church volunteers, mosque committees, union teachers, nurses, carpenters, janitors, and immigrant mothers. They are neither ideological radicals nor corporate loyalists. What unites them is lived struggle — the daily effort to survive with dignity in a rigged economy.

Mamdani fused these two energies: the organized socialist left and the pragmatic, economically squeezed middle. His campaign proved that democratic socialism can speak in a language of compassion and competence that resonates far beyond its traditional base.

3. BREAKING THE WALL OF MEDIA EXCLUSION

Mainstream outlets ignored or caricatured him for months — a textbook case of what I call Journalism of Exclusion: visibility control ➛ framing and labeling ➛ narrative closure. First, they don't show you. Then they mock you. Finally, they declare you irrelevant. And then, just before the elections, big media's disdain, even disparagement against Mamdani and socialism, is pronounced.

But social media, local press, and grassroots networks broke that monopoly. Every sneer became an amplifier. Each dismissive headline drove more small donors and volunteers his way. The fortress of consent began to crumble — just as Noam Chomsky once described and I've witnessed in my decades of teaching critical thinking to New York's labor movement.

4. THE NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

This campaign isn't about a mythical "center versus extremes." The true contest is between democratic socialism and authoritarian plutocracy.

The far right in America is not a fringe; it is a well-funded, organized attempt to end democracy and establish a corporate-nationalist state. By contrast, the social-democratic left — from Bernie Sanders to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to Pramila Jayapal to Zohran Mamdani — fights for redistribution, civil liberties, and the renewal of democratic life itself. These are mainstream demands, not radical fantasies.

As the Democratic establishment — the Clinton-Cuomo-Adams wing — decays under its own cynicism, resistance to the right is increasingly "left-coded." Mamdani's ascent marks that shift: the moral revival of a party that once claimed to represent working people.

5. LESSONS FOR THE MOVEMENT

Mamdani's story offers lessons far beyond New York:

Organization matters. Charisma alone doesn't win elections; disciplined, member-driven structures do.

Empathy builds power. Movements rooted in real conversations can outlast any corporate ad-buy.

Exclusion can be broken. When people create their own channels of communication, truth travels faster than propaganda.

Coalitions can grow. Democratic socialists and the moderate working class can share common ground when language becomes inclusive rather than sectarian.

Whatever happens next, something irreversible has begun. The campaign showed that hope — rational, organized hope — can again be the engine of politics.

6. TOWARD A NEW AMERICAN ALLIANCE

The Second Circle is no abstraction. It now walks the streets of Queens, canvasses the Bronx, and organizes in Staten Island. It includes both the disciplined members of NYC-DSA and the unaffiliated millions who still believe fairness is possible.

This fusion is the future: a politics that is bold enough to confront billionaires yet broad enough to unite teachers, taxi drivers, and tech workers under the same banner of dignity.

If Mamdani's rise proves anything, it is that democracy can still fight back — not through consultants and slogans, but through solidarity. Ordinary New Yorkers have remembered their collective strength. In a cynical age, that realization itself is revolutionary — peaceful, democratic, and socialist in the truest sense.

Dr. Partha Banerjee is a Brooklyn-based writer, educator, and media critic. He has interviewed Noam Chomsky seven times and authored 18 books.

~ NO 25 ~ STOPPING NOW

NEW GROUP FOUNDED TO LEAD PUSH FOR AFFORDABILITY AGENDA

By John Tarleton

Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani's campaign had 104,000 volunteers who knocked on more than three million doors to get him elected. And now a new group—Our Time NYC —is looking to channel that energy into a new round of mass canvassing. Their goal is to build public support for raising taxes on the rich and major corporations that would provide the resources needed to fund Mamdani campaign promises including free universal childcare and fast and free buses.

"For a lot of people, this is their first political moment. It's the first political action they've ever taken. And now it's like we need to keep that momentum going, keep that energy up, and get them to actually win our demands," says Magdalena Morańda, field manager for Our Time.

Our Time is a 501(c)4 organization that can participate directly in the political process, but cannot be directed by any elected official. The organization doesn't have dues or membership. However, its senior officers are all members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and former Mamdani campaign volunteers.

Mamdani's massive field effort was organized by DSA. Our Time will have access to voter info that DSA canvassers have gathered, Morańda said, which will help them go back to known Mamdani supporters and ask them to get involved again by calling and emailing their state legislators and Gov. Kathy Hochul who will have the final say on tax hikes for the rich. If they're interested, they will be invited to help volunteer and canvas their neighbors. But, Morańda adds, outreach won't stop with eligible voters as it would in an election campaign. "We can talk to anyone," she said. "We can ask anyone to shout out to our legislators or to come to Albany with us when we're in the middle of budget season."

Negotiations on New York State's annual budget usually conclude in late March or early April. With Gov. Hochul running for re-election in 2026 and Mamdani riding high in the polls after his upset victory, supporters of his agenda believe this spring will be their moment of maximum leverage over the governor. Our Time held a kick-off rally at Union Square on November 16 that drew around 200 people including five State Assembly candidates that DSA hopes to send to Albany in 2026.

"Billionaires treat this city as a playground for the rich while the working class scrounges around for dignity," said Christian Celeste Tate who is running in Assembly District 54 in Bushwick and East New York. "What we can build is a city where everyone can thrive."

By mid-November, Our Time had recruited 150 field leads—the crucial middle layer of volunteers who coordinate all the details of running a local canvas—according to Morańda, and hope to double the number. As a comparison, the Mamdani campaign had 700 field leads by the end of the election.

Our Time will hold a mass call December 4 to update volunteers about more of their plans. The first day of canvassing will be December 13, almost one year to the day after the Mamdani campaign kicked off its field canvassing.

"There is always the next thing," said Nicholas, an Our Time volunteer who attended the Nov. 16 rally. He said he had participated in more than 100 Zohran canvassers.

His friend Johanna von Maack said she had participated in 40 Zohran canvasses and was ready to return to the doors and the patient work of building a better world one conversation at a time.

"We're going to be canvassing for the rest of our lives listening to our neighbors and their needs," von Maack said. "This is something I believe in."

For more, see ourtime.nyc.

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ZOHRAN MAMDANI
A 'NEW ERA' IS COMING

THE SUN MAY HAVE SET OVER OUR CITY THIS EVENING, BUT AS EUGENE DEBS ONCE SAID, "I CAN SEE THE DAWN OF A BETTER DAY FOR HUMANITY." FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN REMEMBER, THE WORKING PEOPLE OF NEW YORK HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THE WEALTHY AND THE WELL-CONNECTED THAT POWER DOES NOT BELONG IN THEIR HANDS. FINGERS BRUISED FROM LIFTING BOXES ON THE WAREHOUSE FLOOR, PALMS CALLOUSED FROM DELIVERY BIKE HANDLEBARS, KNUCKLES SCARRED WITH KITCHEN BURNS: THESE ARE NOT HANDS THAT HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO HOLD POWER. AND YET, OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS, YOU HAVE DARED TO REACH FOR SOMETHING GREATER. TONIGHT, AGAINST ALL ODDS, WE HAVE GRASPED IT. THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS. MY FRIENDS, WE HAVE TOPPLED A POLITICAL DYNASTY. I WISH ANDREW CUOMO ONLY THE BEST IN PRIVATE LIFE. BUT LET TONIGHT BE THE FINAL TIME I UTTER HIS NAME, AS WE TURN THE PAGE ON A POLITICS THAT ABANDONS THE MANY AND ANSWERS ONLY TO THE FEW. NEW YORK, TONIGHT YOU HAVE DELIVERED A MANDATE FOR CHANGE. A MANDATE FOR A NEW KIND OF POLITICS. A MANDATE FOR A CITY WE CAN AFFORD. AND A MANDATE FOR A GOVERNMENT THAT DELIVERS EXACTLY THAT. ON JANUARY 1, I WILL BE SWORN IN AS THE MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY. AND THAT IS BECAUSE OF YOU. SO BEFORE I SAY ANYTHING ELSE, I MUST SAY THIS: THANK YOU. THANK YOU TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF NEW YORKERS WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT THE PROMISE OF A BETTER FUTURE WAS A RELIC OF THE PAST. YOU SHOWED THAT WHEN POLITICS SPEAKS TO YOU WITHOUT CONDESCENSION, WE CAN USHER IN A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP. WE WILL FIGHT FOR YOU, BECAUSE WE ARE YOU. OR, AS WE SAY ON STEINWAY, ANA MINKUM WA ALAIKUM. THANK YOU TO THOSE SO OFTEN FORGOTTEN BY THE POLITICS OF OUR CITY, WHO MADE THIS MOVEMENT THEIR OWN. I SPEAK OF YEMENI BODEGA OWNERS AND MEXICAN ABUELAS, SENEGALESE TAXI DRIVERS AND UZBEK NURSES, TRINIDADIAN LINE COOKS AND ETHIOPIAN AUNTIES. YES, AUNTIES. TO EVERY NEW YORKER IN KENSINGTON AND MIDWOOD AND HUNTS POINT, KNOW THIS: THIS CITY IS YOUR CITY, AND THIS DEMOCRACY IS YOURS TOO. THIS CAMPAIGN IS ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE WESLEY, AN 1199 ORGANIZER I MET OUTSIDE OF ELMHURST HOSPITAL ON THURSDAY NIGHT — A NEW YORKER WHO LIVES ELSEWHERE, WHO COMMUTES TWO HOURS EACH WAY FROM PENNSYLVANIA, BECAUSE RENT IS TOO EXPENSIVE IN THIS CITY. IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE THE WOMAN I MET ON THE BX33 YEARS AGO WHO SAID TO ME, "I USED TO LOVE NEW YORK, BUT NOW IT'S JUST WHERE I LIVE." AND IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE RICHARD, THE TAXI DRIVER I WENT ON A FIFTEEN-DAY HUNGER STRIKE WITH OUTSIDE OF CITY HALL, WHO STILL HAS TO DRIVE HIS CAB SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. MY BROTHER, WE ARE IN CITY HALL NOW. THIS VICTORY IS FOR ALL OF THEM. AND IT'S FOR ALL OF YOU, THE MORE THAN 100,000 VOLUNTEERS WHO BUILT THIS CAMPAIGN INTO AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE. BECAUSE OF YOU, WE WILL MAKE THIS CITY ONE THAT WORKING PEOPLE CAN LOVE AND LIVE IN AGAIN. WITH EVERY DOOR KNOCKED, EVERY PETITION SIGNATURE EARNED, AND EVERY HARD-EARNED CONVERSATION, YOU ERODED THE CYNICISM THAT HAS COME TO DEFINE OUR POLITICS. NOW, I KNOW THAT I HAVE ASKED FOR MUCH FROM YOU OVER THIS LAST YEAR. TIME AND AGAIN, YOU HAVE ANSWERED MY CALLS. BUT I HAVE ONE FINAL REQUEST. NEW YORK CITY, BREATHE THIS MOMENT IN. WE HAVE HELD OUR BREATH FOR LONGER THAN WE KNOW. WE HAVE HELD IT IN ANTICIPATION OF DEFEAT, HELD IT BECAUSE THE AIR HAS BEEN KNOCKED OUT OF OUR LUNGS TOO MANY TIMES TO COUNT, HELD IT BECAUSE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO EXHALE. THANKS TO ALL OF THOSE WHO SACRIFICED SO MUCH. WE ARE BREATHING IN THE AIR OF A CITY THAT HAS BEEN REBORN. TO MY CAMPAIGN TEAM, WHO BELIEVED WHEN NO ONE ELSE DID AND WHO TOOK AN ELECTORAL PROJECT AND TURNED IT INTO SO MUCH MORE: I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO EXPRESS THE DEPTH OF MY GRATITUDE. YOU CAN SLEEP NOW. TO MY PARENTS, MAMA AND BABA: YOU HAVE MADE ME INTO THE MAN I AM TODAY. I AM SO PROUD TO BE YOUR SON. AND TO MY INCREDIBLE WIFE, RAMA, HAYATI: THERE IS NO ONE I WOULD RATHER HAVE BY MY SIDE IN THIS MOMENT, AND IN EVERY MOMENT. TO EVERY NEW YORKER — WHETHER YOU VOTED FOR ME, FOR ONE OF MY OPPONENTS, OR FELT TOO DISAPPOINTED BY POLITICS TO VOTE AT ALL — THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE MYSELF WORTHY OF YOUR TRUST. I WILL WAKE EACH MORNING WITH A SINGULAR PURPOSE: TO MAKE THIS CITY BETTER FOR YOU THAN IT WAS THE DAY BEFORE. THERE ARE MANY WHO THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD NEVER COME, WHO FEARED THAT WE WOULD BE CONDEMNED ONLY TO A FUTURE OF LESS, WITH EVERY ELECTION CONSIGNING US SIMPLY TO MORE OF THE SAME. AND THERE ARE OTHERS WHO SEE POLITICS TODAY AS TOO CRUEL FOR THE FLAME OF HOPE TO STILL BURN. NEW YORK, WE HAVE ANSWERED THOSE FEARS. TONIGHT WE HAVE SPOKEN IN A CLEAR VOICE. HOPE IS ALIVE. HOPE IS A DECISION THAT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW YORKERS MADE DAY AFTER DAY, VOLUNTEER SHIFT AFTER VOLUNTEER SHIFT, DESPITE ATTACK AD AFTER ATTACK AD. MORE THAN A MILLION OF US STOOD IN OUR CHURCHES, IN GYMNASIUMS, IN COMMUNITY CENTERS, AS WE FILLED IN THE LEDGER OF DEMOCRACY. AND WHILE WE CAST OUR BALLOTS ALONE, WE CHOSE HOPE TOGETHER. HOPE OVER TYRANNY. HOPE OVER BIG MONEY AND SMALL IDEAS. HOPE OVER DESPAIR. WE WON BECAUSE NEW YORKERS ALLOWED THEMSELVES TO HOPE THAT THE IMPOSSIBLE COULD BE MADE POSSIBLE. AND WE WON BECAUSE WE INSISTED THAT NO LONGER WOULD POLITICS BE SOMETHING THAT IS DONE TO US. NOW, IT IS SOMETHING THAT WE DO. STANDING BEFORE YOU, I THINK OF THE WORDS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: "A MOMENT COMES, BUT RARELY IN HISTORY, WHEN WE STEP OUT FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW, WHEN AN AGE ENDS, AND WHEN THE SOUL OF A NATION, LONG SUPPRESSED, FINDS UTTERANCE." TONIGHT WE HAVE STEPPED OUT FROM THE OLD INTO THE NEW. SO LET US SPEAK NOW, WITH CLARITY AND CONVICTION THAT CANNOT BE MISUNDERSTOOD, ABOUT WHAT THIS NEW AGE WILL DELIVER, AND FOR WHOM. THIS WILL BE AN AGE WHERE NEW YORKERS EXPECT FROM THEIR LEADERS A BOLD VISION OF WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE, RATHER THAN A LIST OF EXCUSES FOR WHAT WE ARE TOO TIMID TO ATTEMPT. CENTRAL TO THAT VISION WILL BE THE MOST AMBITIOUS AGENDA TO TACKLE THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS THAT THIS CITY HAS SEEN SINCE THE DAYS OF FIORELLO LA GUARDIA: AN AGENDA THAT WILL FREEZE THE RENTS FOR MORE THAN TWO MILLION RENT-STABILIZED TENANTS, MAKE BUSES FAST AND FREE, AND DELIVER UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE ACROSS OUR CITY. YEARS FROM NOW, MAY OUR ONLY REGRET BE THAT THIS DAY TOOK SO LONG TO COME. THIS NEW AGE WILL BE ONE OF RELENTLESS IMPROVEMENT. WE WILL HIRE THOUSANDS MORE TEACHERS. WE WILL CUT WASTE FROM A BLOATED BUREAUCRACY. WE WILL WORK TIRELESSLY TO MAKE LIGHTS SHINE AGAIN IN THE HALLWAYS OF NYCHA [NYC HOUSING AUTHORITY] DEVELOPMENTS WHERE THEY HAVE LONG FLICKERED. SAFETY AND JUSTICE WILL GO HAND IN HAND AS WE WORK WITH POLICE OFFICERS TO REDUCE CRIME AND CREATE A DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SAFETY THAT TACKLES THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AND HOMELESSNESS CRISES HEAD ON. EXCELLENCE WILL BECOME THE EXPECTATION ACROSS GOVERNMENT, NOT THE EXCEPTION. IN THIS NEW AGE WE MAKE FOR OURSELVES, WE WILL REFUSE TO ALLOW THOSE WHO TRAFFIC IN DIVISION AND HATE TO PIT US AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. IN THIS MOMENT OF POLITICAL DARKNESS, NEW YORK WILL BE THE LIGHT. HERE, WE BELIEVE IN STANDING UP FOR THOSE WE LOVE, WHETHER YOU ARE AN IMMIGRANT, A MEMBER OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY, ONE OF THE MANY BLACK WOMEN THAT DONALD TRUMP HAS FIRED FROM A FEDERAL JOB, A SINGLE MOM STILL WAITING FOR THE COST OF GROCERIES TO GO DOWN, OR ANYONE ELSE WITH THEIR BACK AGAINST THE WALL. YOUR STRUGGLE IS OURS TOO. AND WE WILL BUILD A CITY HALL THAT STANDS STEADFAST ALONGSIDE JEWISH NEW YORKERS AND DOES NOT WAVER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SCOURGE OF ANTISEMITISM. WHERE THE MORE THAN ONE MILLION MUSLIMS KNOW THAT THEY BELONG — NOT JUST IN THE FIVE BOROUGHS OF THIS CITY BUT IN THE HALLS OF POWER. NO MORE WILL NEW YORK BE A CITY WHERE YOU CAN TRAFFIC IN ISLAMOPHOBIA AND WIN AN ELECTION. THIS NEW AGE WILL BE DEFINED BY A COMPETENCE AND A COMPASSION THAT HAVE TOO LONG BEEN PLACED AT ODDS WITH ONE ANOTHER. WE WILL PROVE THAT THERE IS NO PROBLEM TOO LARGE FOR GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE, AND NO CONCERN TOO SMALL FOR IT TO CARE ABOUT. FOR YEARS, THOSE IN CITY HALL HAVE ONLY HELPED THOSE WHO CAN HELP THEM. BUT ON JANUARY 1, WE WILL USHER IN A CITY GOVERNMENT THAT HELPS EVERYONE. NOW, I KNOW THAT MANY HAVE HEARD OUR MESSAGE ONLY THROUGH THE PRISM OF MISINFORMATION. TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN SPENT TO REDEFINE REALITY AND TO CONVINCE OUR NEIGHBORS THAT THIS NEW AGE IS SOMETHING THAT SHOULD FRIGHTEN THEM. AS HAS SO OFTEN OCCURRED, THE BILLIONAIRE CLASS HAS SOUGHT TO CONVINCE THOSE MAKING $30 AN HOUR THAT THEIR ENEMIES ARE THOSE EARNING $20 AN HOUR. THEY WANT THE PEOPLE TO FIGHT AMONGST OURSELVES SO THAT WE REMAIN DISTRACTED FROM THE WORK OF REMAKING A LONG-BROKEN SYSTEM. WE REFUSE TO LET THEM DICTATE THE RULES OF THE GAME ANYMORE. THEY CAN PLAY BY THE SAME RULES AS THE REST OF US. TOGETHER, WE WILL USHER IN A GENERATION OF CHANGE. AND IF WE EMBRACE THIS BRAVE NEW COURSE, RATHER THAN FLEEING FROM IT, WE CAN RESPOND TO OLIGARCHY AND AUTHORITARIANISM WITH THE STRENGTH IT FEARS, NOT THE APPEASEMENT IT CRAVES. AFTER ALL, IF ANYONE CAN SHOW A NATION BETRAYED BY DONALD TRUMP HOW TO DEFEAT HIM, IT IS THE CITY THAT GAVE RISE TO HIM. AND IF THERE IS ANY WAY TO TERRIFY A DESPOT, IT IS BY DISMANTLING THE VERY CONDITIONS THAT ALLOWED HIM TO ACCUMULATE POWER. THIS IS NOT ONLY HOW WE STOP TRUMP; IT'S HOW WE STOP THE NEXT ONE. SO, DONALD TRUMP, SINCE I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING, I HAVE FOUR WORDS FOR YOU: TURN THE VOLUME UP. WE WILL HOLD BAD LANDLORDS TO ACCOUNT, BECAUSE THE DONALD TRUMPS OF OUR CITY HAVE GROWN FAR TOO COMFORTABLE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR TENANTS. WE WILL PUT AN END TO THE CULTURE OF CORRUPTION THAT HAS ALLOWED BILLIONAIRES LIKE TRUMP TO EVADE TAXATION AND EXPLOIT TAX BREAKS. WE WILL STAND ALONGSIDE UNIONS AND EXPAND LABOR PROTECTIONS, BECAUSE WE KNOW, JUST AS DONALD TRUMP DOES, THAT WHEN WORKING PEOPLE HAVE IRONCLAD RIGHTS, THE BOSSES WHO SEEK TO EXTORT THEM BECOME VERY SMALL INDEED. NEW YORK WILL REMAIN A CITY OF IMMIGRANTS: A CITY BUILT BY IMMIGRANTS, POWERED BY IMMIGRANTS AND, AS OF TONIGHT, LED BY AN IMMIGRANT. SO HEAR ME, PRESIDENT TRUMP, WHEN I SAY THIS: TO GET TO ANY OF US, YOU WILL HAVE TO GET THROUGH ALL OF US. WHEN WE ENTER CITY HALL IN 58 DAYS, EXPECTATIONS WILL BE HIGH. WE WILL MEET THEM. A GREAT NEW YORKER ONCE SAID THAT WHILE YOU CAMPAIGN IN POETRY, YOU GOVERN IN PROSE. IF THAT MUST BE TRUE, LET THE PROSE WE WRITE STILL RHYME, AND LET US BUILD A SHINING CITY FOR ALL. AND WE MUST CHART A NEW PATH, AS BOLD AS THE ONE WE HAVE ALREADY TRAVELED. AFTER ALL, THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WOULD TELL YOU THAT I AM FAR FROM THE PERFECT CANDIDATE. I AM YOUNG, DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS TO GROW OLDER. I AM MUSLIM. I AM A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST. AND MOST DAMNING OF ALL, I REFUSE TO APOLOGIZE FOR ANY OF THIS. AND YET, IF TONIGHT TEACHES US ANYTHING, IT IS THAT CONVENTION HAS HELD US BACK. WE HAVE BOWED AT THE ALTAR OF CAUTION, AND WE HAVE PAID A MIGHTY PRICE. TOO MANY WORKING PEOPLE CANNOT RECOGNIZE THEMSELVES IN OUR PARTY, AND TOO MANY AMONG US HAVE TURNED TO THE RIGHT FOR ANSWERS TO WHY THEY'VE BEEN LEFT BEHIND. WE WILL LEAVE MEDIOCRITY IN OUR PAST. NO LONGER WILL WE HAVE TO OPEN A HISTORY BOOK FOR PROOF THAT DEMOCRATS CAN DARE TO BE GREAT. OUR GREATNESS WILL BE ANYTHING BUT ABSTRACT. IT WILL BE FELT BY EVERY RENT-STABILIZED TENANT WHO WAKES UP ON THE FIRST OF EVERY MONTH KNOWING THE AMOUNT THEY'RE GOING TO PAY HASN'T SOARED SINCE THE MONTH BEFORE. IT WILL BE FELT BY EACH GRANDPARENT WHO CAN AFFORD TO STAY IN THE HOME THEY HAVE WORKED FOR, AND WHOSE GRANDCHILDREN LIVE NEARBY BECAUSE THE COST OF CHILDCARE DIDN'T SEND THEM TO LONG ISLAND. IT WILL BE FELT BY THE SINGLE MOTHER WHO IS SAFE ON HER COMMUTE AND WHOSE BUS RUNS FAST ENOUGH THAT SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO RUSH SCHOOL DROP-OFF TO MAKE IT TO WORK ON TIME. AND IT WILL BE FELT WHEN NEW YORKERS OPEN THEIR NEWSPAPERS IN THE MORNING AND READ HEADLINES OF SUCCESS, NOT SCANDAL. MOST OF ALL, IT WILL BE FELT BY EACH NEW YORKER WHEN THE CITY THEY LOVE FINALLY LOVES THEM BACK. TOGETHER, NEW YORK, WE'RE GOING TO FREEZE THE. . . [CROWD YELLS: "RENT!"] TOGETHER, NEW YORK, WE'RE GOING TO MAKE BUSES FAST AND. . . [CROWD YELLS: "FREE!"] TOGETHER, NEW YORK, WE'RE GOING TO DELIVER UNIVERSAL. . . [CROWD YELLS: "CHILDCARE!"] LET THE WORDS WE'VE SPOKEN TOGETHER, THE DREAMS WE'VE DREAMT TOGETHER, BECOME THE AGENDA WE DELIVER TOGETHER.

NEW YORK, THIS POWER, IT'S YOURS. THIS CITY BELONGS TO YOU. — ZOHRAN MAMDANI

BACK IN THE USSR

THE POLITICAL FIGHT FOR SOUTHERN BROOKLYN'S RUSSIAN SPEAKERS

COURTESY/NYC SURJ

BACK TO THE USSR: *Russian-speaking canvassers at Brighton Beach Park with Cyrllic-language Zohran Mamdani t-shirts.*

By Nicole Krishtul

In the lead up to the New York City mayoral election, competing political camps focused on my community: the Russian-speaking diaspora of deep southern Brooklyn.

In the week before election day, a super PAC with nearly $2 million dollars in contributions launched a six-figure campaign targeting Russian-speaking voters to support Andrew Cuomo. In a last ditch effort to stop Democratic nominee Zohran Mamdani from likely victory, this initiative sought to pull votes away from Republican nominee Curtis Sliwa who won most of southern Brooklyn in his 2021 mayoral run. The PAC's message claimed that "a vote for Sliwa is a vote for Mamdani."

Meanwhile, I was energized by the renewed attention on southern Brooklyn from the left. The group, the New York City chapter of Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ), which organizes working class white people, concentrated their efforts for weeks on outreach to this community in Sheepshead Bay and Brighton Beach. Through SURJ, other Russian-speaking canvassers and I doorknocked with multilingual campaign materials while wearing t-shirts with Zohran's name in cyrillic letters.

Canvassing for a socialist in hostile "Trump territory" was no easy task. But we believe that Zohran's style of politics can resonate across the city, included in the often forgotten neighborhoods of southern Brooklyn. By the end of the race, we had conducted nine canvasses in which 71 unique canvassers participated in 100 canvass shifts and knocked on 1,670 doors. In Sheepshead Bay, Mamdani received between 22 and 33 percent of the vote. In the three Brighton Beach precincts, it was 12, 17 and 56 percent. While our impact was limited by territory we were working on, each voter persuaded was important for Mamdani's overall vote total surpassing 50 percent.

FROM THE USSR TO LITTLE RUSSIA

In 1989, my parents immigrated from Ukraine to the U.S. as part of a larger wave of immigration of the 1980s and 1990s. Just like my family, many of those refugees landed in Sheepshead and Brighton Beach (known as "Little Russia"), and surrounding neighborhoods. They often came with no money, no English, and no degree that meant anything across the ocean. Although many relied on public assistance like food stamps and rental assistance, those beneficiaries will often now decry those same programs as giveaways to less deserving recent arrivals.

Many of those refugees were also Jewish, fleeing religious discrimination in their home republics. For them, the experience with socialism is deeply intertwined with anti-semitism. Jewish families like mine from the former Soviet Union are painfully familiar with the infamous "5th line" in Soviet passports, which explicitly marked them as Jews. This ethnic marker made it easy for the state to discriminate — barring many from jobs, education, and imposing travel restrictions. My parents, who were denied the ability to be publicly Jewish in the Soviet Union, were only able to have a traditional Jewish wedding under a chuppah after they moved to the United States.

With the election coming to a close amid growing attacks that falsely claimed Zohran Mamdani is antisemitic, they feared a return of everything they had left behind. Meanwhile, a generational divide was growing. Older immigrants were shocked and horrified that their children were knocking on doors for a Palestine-supporting socialist. The younger generation was desperate for change in a city they can no longer afford and an end to genocide.

A RED WAVE ACROSS SOUTHERN BROOKLYN

Once a Democratic stronghold, southern Brooklyn has been reliably red over the past decade. Trump won significant swaths of the area in 2016, and his popularity only continued to grow in 2020 and 2024. At the local level, residents of Sheepshead Bay and Brighton Beach elected Councilmember Inna Vernikov in 2021 — the same politician who brought a gun to counter-protest a pro-Palestine rally at Brooklyn College and called Jewish leaders nazi collaborators for engaging with Mamdani.

In Donald Trump and local-level proxies like Councilmember Vernikov, the Russian-speaking diaspora resonated with the messages of the right. Many believe that illegal immigrants are destroying the country (even if some of our own came through illegal means), that we risk the revival of a new Soviet Union, and that Republicans must block socialists from power before the country turns into what former Soviet immigrants escaped from.

When the Mamdani campaign kicked into high gear, it became a lightning rod for some of the biggest concerns among the post-Soviet Jewish population of South Brooklyn. Municipal grocery stores reminded them of breadlines and empty shelves, and taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers felt like a slippery slope back to Bolshevism. Zohran's critiques of Israel and acknowledgement of its genocide in Gaza led to Islamophobic signs popping up around the neighborhood. No matter how many times Zohran repeats the same message — that he will be a mayor for all New Yorkers and create a Department of Community Safety that will address antisemitic hate violence — many continued to see his candidacy as a threat to Jewish safety.

THE HOPES & THE UPHILL BATTLES

It's going to be an uphill battle to change the politics of southern Brooklyn, but fractures are emerging. In the Democratic primary, Zohran won over 70% of the vote in a few Brighton Beach electoral precincts. Those precincts are small blue islands in a red sea, but ones we hope to grow. The residents of southern Brooklyn are experiencing the cost of living crisis that many New Yorkers are feeling: housing, groceries, and childcare are squeezing their pockets too.

The Russian-speaking canvassers in Brighton Beach experienced mixed results in their canvasses: some doors slammed, scolding by babushkas sitting on benches, husbands holding their wives back from charging at our canvassers. But they also spoke to residents who were curious about Zohran. Others vaguely knew about the election but hadn't had anyone knock on their door and were excited to talk about local politics with a volunteer in their native language. Along her route, a canvasser heard an elderly woman complain about long waiting times for the bus. The canvasser wished she had stopped to chat with the woman about Zohran's plans for fast and free buses.

Those are the small signs of hope: that despite the misinformation, we were able to reach people through Zohran's economic agenda. I don't expect the politics of Russian-speaking immigrants to change in one election cycle, but this campaign can be the start of a renewed hope for southern Brooklyn.

CHAE KIHN

JOHN TARLETON

ZOHRAN 2.0

DSA-BACKED DIANA MORENO ENTERS RACE FOR MAMDANI'S STATE ASSEMBLY SEAT

By John Tarleton

Diana Moreno's family immigrated from her native Ecuador to Lakeland, Florida in 1999. She was 11-years-old. They were pursuing the American dream of hard work and material success. Instead she recalls, "we came into this country at the beginning of the decline."

Politically minded from a young age, Moreno's story is emblematic of a millennial generation that moved decisively to the left amid the growing rot in this country's political establishment — a stolen presidential election in 2000, 9/11 and the anti-immigrant hysteria that followed, the Iraq War, the 2008 financial crisis, Barack Obama's "hope and change" campaign and the disillusionment that quickly followed. Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential run revived Moreno's interest in electoral politics as a means of making change while revealing the intransigence of Democratic Party elites.

When MAGA-friendly Governor Ron DeSantis took office in Florida in 2019, Moreno, a queer Latina, decided it was time to leave. She took a job at an immigrant rights organization in Queens. In "The World's Borough", Moreno finally found the diversity and inclusiveness that eluded her in Florida. She soon joined New York City Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). After attending her first meeting, she was invited to join a post-meeting hangout by one of the leaders of the Queens branch of the chapter, Zohran Mamdani.

Moreno quickly became a leader in Queens DSA and remains close friends with the mayor-elect. She is now running to succeed him in a special election that will be held in February or early March after he vacates his Assembly District 36 seat on January 1. Two other candidates, Rana Abdelhamid and Mary Jobaida, have also filed to run for the seat.

Moreno is the mother of a 14-month old son who pays $2,750 per month for childcare, the equivalent of renting a second apartment. If elected, she would arrive in Albany just in time to join the annual state budget battle and fight for one of Mamdani's signature campaign pledges: free universal childcare for all children under six years of age.

"The upcoming session in Albany is crucial," she told *The Indypendent*. "We need to have the kind of budget that makes it possible for Zohran to implement his affordability agenda. So we absolutely must have a person who's committed to the project in this seat."

INDYPENDENT: Tell us more about why you have made winning free universal childcare the centerpiece of your campaign.

DIANA MORENO: My passion for fighting for universal childcare for all working families in New York comes not only from my personal experience of paying an arm and a leg on childcare from the care of my 14-month-old. It comes from a deeply rooted politics of reproductive justice that understands that feminism isn't only the right not to parent through access to free and safe abortion on demand, without apologies. It also means the right to parent. Those of us who are embarking on the journey of becoming caretakers to precious new human beings should have the resources that we need to be successful so that our children can thrive. It sounds so basic, yet capitalism makes it nearly impossible for working parents to have the resources and the time to care for precious young children who are the future of this country.

If you win the special election, you will arrive in Albany in February or March just in time for the battle over the annual state budget. What do you do if your Democratic colleagues tell you they like your childcare ideas, but the money just isn't there?

A budget is a moral document, right? It's the way we name what and who we prioritize. In 2025, we have a record number of homeless children in the wealthiest city in the wealthiest country in the history of the world. We cannot turn our backs on the children of New York. We must meet the moment with bold solutions that will prioritize the very people that the federal government is failing and betraying.

FIGHTING FOR THE CHILDREN: *Diana Moreno says winning universal child care is her top priority.*

ELECTION NIGHT: *Diana Moreno (right) celebrates Zohran Mamdani's mayoral victory.*

Talk about your own life experiences as an immigrant in the United States

My mom was a high school teacher and my dad had an office job at a telephone company. When we moved to the US and started from scratch, my dad was doing landscaping and washing dishes. My mom was doing housekeeping for a hotel and later ended up working for a wealthy person as a cleaning lady. Witnessing how hard they had to work to give us a baseline of economic stability and the type of work they had to do because of their immigration status was deeply politicizing.

They went down the class ladder?

Yeah, they went down the class ladder. We also experienced a lot of racism as Spanish-speaking brown people in Lakeland, Florida where we lived. The image of the United States in the television and movies I grew up with in Ecuador of multiculturalism and inclusion was unfortunately false. It just was not the reality my family and I experienced. It's traumatizing as a young person, to experience exclusion, and to experience bullying and to have to sort of push down your identity.

Your parents managed to achieve the American Dream of home ownership and then have it taken away.

My parents worked their asses off to buy a home they lost in the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008-2009. I canvassed for Obama in 2008 and was hopeful we were going to see change. Watching him abandon the public option during the fight over the Affordable Care Act and bail out the banks while doing nothing for homeowners was deeply disappointing.

Besides different policy positions, is there anything more that makes the democratic socialist movement distinct from the conventional Democratic Party?

Solidarity is at the center of our politics. We are all interconnected and there is a role for every single person to do their part. This is the work of building a new world, and I invite everyone to be a part of it. It is how we not just fight back against the despair and the cruelty of the moment; it's how we survive it. Because whenever you're isolated and you witness what's going on in the world, you can absolutely drown in hopelessness. But when you're connected to a movement, you are reminded that there are more of you, that you are in the majority, and you are refueled by the courage, by the bravery, by the talent, by the generosity of the people around you, and it gives you the strength to keep going.

ERIC ADAMS, ONE LAST TIME

ESTEBAN GUERRA

By John Teufel

This will be my last column about Eric Adams. It is, to be blunt, a tremendous relief.

In January of 2022, I approached John Tarleton, editor-in-chief of *The Indypendent*, with an idea. Eric Adams, I pitched, is a genuine eccentric. He says and does ridiculous things, seemingly with no awareness of how ridiculous they are. His mayoral administration was going to be a lot of fun. Why not a monthly column recapping all the wacky goings-on of New York City's chief executive? We could call it, "The Month In Eric Adams" (can't accuse me of burying ledes).

John liked it, and my first column for *The Indy* was born. As I read it now, I'm struck by how the seeds of Adams' eventual destruction were planted right at the start. He spent that initial month defending his hiring of scandal-scarred Philip Banks as deputy mayor for public safety and his brother David as schools chancellor. Both David and Banks resigned in October 2024 after the FBI confiscated their cell phones as part of a far-reaching investigation into bribery claims.

I ended that column with a pithy "47 months to go." I knew there would be scandals, as there always are, and I knew that an Eric Adams NYPD would reach dystopian levels. But I never foresaw the depths to which the Adams administration would sink — that he would be indicted, that he would come to a corrupt understanding with Donald Trump to quash that indictment, that his NYPD would fall apart in a whirlwind of scandal and crime. Who could have anticipated, in those innocent days of 2022, that the United States would soon be taken over by fascists and that the mayor of New York City would find common cause with them?

I tried to keep up. I made it five months with timely columns before I started having dreams of Eric Adams telling me my horoscope in my mother's voice and had to step back to semi-monthly. I bought, for $30 I could have given to a homeless person, Adams' absurd, fear-mongering book *Don't Let It Happen*, and I read the whole thing, with intentions of writing a review that never happened. ("What does this mean???" is one of my scrawled notes in the margins.) I wrote a detailed analysis of how Eric Adams cost the Democrats the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterms, and I muted notifications when AOC tweeted out my breakdown of Adams' incredible and irresponsible giveaway to the police unions. In the *Village Voice*, I tried to figure out who had the best chance of beating Adams in the next primary. (Full disclosure: I was a Jessica Ramos fan at the time, so probably no one should ever listen to me). I met people, in real life, who had read my work and wanted to talk Adams. My dad, who lives on Long Island, said to me, "Johnny, what is wrong with that Eric Adams?"

I watched the NYPD slowly, then quickly, morph into a bluntly politicized right-wing militia under Adams. Amid the constant hum of psychopathy that lives in our ears now, it can be hard to recognize and remember every insane thing, but surely it was insane when top-ranking members of the NYPD attacked journalists, politicians and judges from their Twitter accounts.

In October 2024, after Adams was indicted, I felt in my blood a burning desire for accountability, and I wrote a column castigating the fools who had helped foist Adams upon us. Nobody who calls Adams a "godsend" who would "save New York" — as Bret Stephens did in the *Times* — should ever work in media again.

Accountability will never come directly for most of the people who promoted Eric Adams, just as it never comes for any evil, powerful person in America. Al Sharpton continues to have an MSNBC show. Hakeem Jeffries, who endorsed Adams in the 2021 primary, has since become the leader of House Democrats. Nate Silver's comeuppance will solely be in the form of the endless replies to his tweets reminding him that this ostensible sage of politics once said he believed Adams may well be the Democratic nominee for president one day.

Eric Adams was the worst mayor in New York City's history. I can say that without knowing a tremendous amount about New York's past mayors, because I know this: No other mayor used our city as leverage to get a fascist President to drop the criminal charges against him. Adams can point to some statistics in his favor — some housing built, better trash policies. All of it ceased to matter when he handed New York to Donald Trump. That was the point at which the Adams administration went from comical to dangerous, when we as New Yorkers felt powerless to stop the ground being sold from under our feet.

In a final act of selfishness, Adams decided to skip the next Democratic primary, ran on a made-up ballot line, and stayed in the race for mayor long after it was clear to all that he could never win. He did this as leverage for a post-mayoralty job, again cynically abusing public institutions for his own gain. Adams will probably become wealthy in his life after Gracie Mansion. Although he is a stain on history nearly universally loathed by New Yorkers, he will also suffer no consequences.

That said: Zohran Mamdani is about to be mayor, and that doesn't happen in a world where Kathryn Garcia or Maya Wiley is the incumbent. If Jeffries and Ritchie Torres and Tom Suozzi and Farah Louis and all the other Adams boosters hadn't pushed him over the line in 2021, where Adams just narrowly beat Garcia and Wiley in the primary, there would be no socialist mayor. That's an Eric Adams legacy we can be thankful for.

THE LIBS ARE THERE FOR THE TAKING

CAN THE LEFT WIN OVER AN ENRAGED DEMOCRATIC PARTY BASE?

SUE BRISK

OCTOBER 18: *No Kings Day protesters march down 7th Avenue.*

By Cole Sandick

The national No Kings rally took place on Saturday Oct. 18 and forced its way into the national consciousness. Seven million Americans in all 50 states lined up to protest and condemn the escalating authoritarianism of Trump's administration, including more than 200,000 people who marched down New York's 7th Avenue. I attended this unabashedly liberal event with a 50-member DSA contingent. My role was to hand out DSA flyers advertising left-wing events taking place after the rally.

I expected a mostly positive reception from liberals, and instead received a universally positive one. DSA, Zohran, and the left in general were explicitly praised by numerous liberals I talked to. Frustration with the Democratic establishment was expressed. Palestinian flags were held side by side with Ukrainian ones. Anti-oligarch chants came alongside anti-Trump ones.

As a political activist who wants to both advance socialism when possible and defend against the rise of fascism when necessary, this was incredibly heartening. The left's reflexive criticism of resistance liberalism as ineffectual and at odds with left-wing objectives is oblivious to how much the terrain has shifted since Trump's re-election.

On November 5, 2024 Trump's second victory hit with crippling force. Millions of American liberals had been promised for years and years that if they were just good soldiers for the establishment, if they just abstained from criticizing Democratic Party leaders for an indefinite period of time, if they just always showed up to vote, the orange-haired monster would eventually go away. Trump's re-election, secured this time with a popular vote victory, shattered this laser-focused vision into a million pieces.

The Democratic Party establishment still could have spun this calamity to their advantage just as they did following their 2016 defeat. They could've fallen back on a centrist vision of governance blaming the "extremes" of the right (which wants fascism) and the left (which wants Medicare-for-All and a Green New Deal). They could have rerun the same resistance liberal hits from Trump's first term and appeased a large part of the party's base.

Instead, every powerful, mainstream American institution that resistance liberals had believed would hold against Trump's fascistic project: the mainstream media, big business, universities, and most stunningly, establishment Democratic politicians began to cave. Moderate Democrats tried to execute a breathtaking flip flop, aggressively playing down the threats posed by Trump, accepting extreme right-wing positions, particularly on immigration, and inexplicably making a big deal about how they were gonna "play dead", in the words of former Bill Clinton aide James Carville. Even worse, Democratic leaders like Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), were often nowhere to be found, hiding away as Trump and Elon Musk gutted the American state.

It only took until last March for the final betrayal to come in the eyes of liberal voters, when Schumer backed away from a debt ceiling showdown with Trump, sacrificing his leverage for zero concessions. A Democratic electorate that until very recently was devoted to their party leaders saw that trust collapse in a manner unparalleled in modern American history.

ANTI-SYSTEM POLITICS

Democratic voters have gone from overwhelmingly wanting the party to get more moderate to overwhelmingly wanting the party to get more progressive. A supermajority of Democratic voters now want their party leaders to be replaced, and, according to polls, are now even more incensed at their establishment than Republican voters were in 2009, at the dawn of the Tea Party.

Leftists are more and more filling the anti-Trump vacuum. Bernie and AOC's Fight Oligarchy tour drew enormous crowds. That same desire for a break with the past helped Zohran Mamdani become New York's first Muslim democratic socialist mayor-elect, buoyed in part by mainstream liberals who admire figures like Brad Lander. In Seattle, Katie Wilson, a longtime community organizer and socialist, has ousted a centrist mayor who was close with that city's political establishment. As we look to 2026, an exhilarating new wave of left wing primary candidates is taking shape from coast to coast.

Liberals have never been more open to radicalization and more excited about anti-system politics. When socialists offer a comprehensive repudiation of every single thing Trump has done, liberals will vote for socialists, so socialists should offer them that in return. Fuse the cause of No Kings with No oligarchs. Such a move would come with numerous positive knock-off effects. Middle and upper middle class liberals always vote, even in incredibly small elections, they have disposable capital, which we could use as a small dollar donation base, and they still have considerable cultural power. Such a pivot could allow the left to win over more moderate voters without actually making any substantive ideological compromises.

There are already examples of smart leftists embracing this excitingly new political reality. The featured speaker at DC's No Kings was not an establishment liberal, but Bernie Sanders. AOC has been masterfully courting this wing of the party for years with performative anti-Trumpism, much to the chagrin of anti-electoral leftists, but much to the delight of establishment liberals who adore her.

Perhaps the most pressing test of this newfound jokerfication of American liberals will be taking place in Maine next year. In a critical Democratic primary to contest a Senate seat held by Republican Susan Collins, the left is rallying behind Graham Platner, a young populist outsider endorsed by Bernie Sanders, while the Democratic party establishment is backing Janet Mills, a consummate establishment boomer liberal. Platner has been under fire for offensive Reddit comments he posted in the 2010s, as well as for a tattoo that he got while he was in the Marines that has links to Nazism. At any point between 2016 and 2024, that would have been the end of his candidacy. Yet, most polls show him still consistently leading both Mills and Collins in head-to-head matchups. That's a sea of change in a state with an older, mostly white population that has previously shown little interest in leftwing candidates. In this brave new era, there could be a lot more of that coming soon.

A REVOLUTIONARY FANTASY FOR OUR TIMES

One Battle After Another
Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson
Warner Bros, Sep. 2025, 162 min

By Michael Kanyongolo

What is a revolution? Is it an outcry against oppression? An inevitable shift of power from one ruling class to the next? A spark of hope that lives in the hearts and minds of those who have no other option? And what happens when those people, those revolutionaries, let the spark fade and are assimilated by the very forces they fight against?

In *One Battle After Another*, Paul Thomas Anderson explores these questions with his audience, showing us the enduring power of hope while reminding us of the brutal sacrifices required to keep that spark alive.

The film begins with the all-too-familiar sight of an immigrant detention center, immediately provoking emotions that aren't tethered to fiction or fantasy, but to the harsh realities of U.S. politics.

The camp is being forcefully liberated by the French 75, a revolutionary group that shoots, bombs, and generally terrorizes its way through establishment forces in the first act of the film.

Perfidia Beverly Hills (yes, that's her name) leads them in a standout performance by Teyana Taylor, whose fierce, proud and unapologetic attitude sets the tone for the primarily Black revolutionary group. Her message is clear from the very first scene: "This is an announcement of a motherfucking revolution."

What's interesting about the French 75 is that doing this — blowing things up, directly attacking the establishment is about more than just the message. It makes them feel good. It gives them a sense of control in a chaotic and oppressive world. Instead of clocking in every day, hating the terror building in the world and feeling powerless to stop it, they fight back. It's a cathartic sentiment modern audiences can unfortunately relate to.

The 75's hot-headed sensibilities are matched by Sean Penn's Colonel Lockjaw, whose tight-lipped, straight-backed military demeanor stands in opposition to everything the 75 fights for. His excessively masculine facade is comedically paired with his short stature, depicting a type of man that tries to bury his flaws beneath layers of aggression and macho energy. He acts as an unyielding, even undying, antagonistic force, sometimes to the point of comedy and other times in brutal expressions of misdirected insecurity. Never before have I seen the absurdity of hypermasculinity and its violent consequences so effectively packed into one character.

Caught in the middle of Lockjaw and Perfidia is *One Battle After Another*'s protagonist, Leonardo DiCaprio's Ghetto Pat, aka Bob. Bob, though just as committed to the cause, seems goofy compared to the rest of the revolutionaries (his name matches his clumsy character). A bombardier for the 75, he and Perfidia share an explosively passionate relationship wrapped up in the momentum of the 75's rampage. But after the dust settles and Perfidia is caught by the authorities, it is Bob who is left with the aftermath of their love affair: their daughter. He goes into hiding, and their baby grows to the age of 16 without ever knowing her mother, living under a name she doesn't know is false.

It is here that the film begins in earnest. While the first act is a masterful display of kinetic backstory, the second is a non-stop thrill ride of chaos. Lockjaw sets his sights on Bob and his daughter, using an ICE raid as an excuse to send in the military and inflict his will upon their city. (Sound familiar yet?)

In this setting, Paul Thomas Anderson showcases another harsh reality that many Americans are facing: the terror of being hunted down in your own home. The military occupation of sanctuary city Baktan Cross is a sight many Americans in liberal cities are now familiar with: armed officers roaming the streets, violent abductions and fierce protests.

Despite the heavy subject matter of the film, it retains its humor, mocking the bizarre supremacists who order these crimes as we follow the bumbling Bob in a manic search for his daughter, depicted by Willah Ferguson, who fleshes out the character and makes her believable. His *Big Lebowski*-style antics, complete with the bathrobe and cigarette holder, carry us from setpiece to setpiece at a relentlessly riotous pace.

Leading Bob and other escaping immigrants from one safe house to another is the cool-headed "Sensei" Sergio St. Carlos (the ever-talented Benicio del Toro). With him, we get brief moments of buddy cop banter between rooftop chases and high-speed pursuits. A particular highlight of their old married couple dynamic occurs after Sensei and Bob outmaneuver the military, the police and Lockjaw himself, only for Bob to get caught drinking a beer in the front seat of Sensei's T-bird.

All of these elements work to break up the darker tones of the film, making the emotional moments hit harder as Paul Thomas Anderson balances the weight of oppression with the ever-enduring spirit of humanity. As Sensei says: "Ocean waves; ocean waves."

The film is an adept blend of social and political commentary packaged in a three-hour roller-coaster that feels like 15 minutes. Epic in scale but personal in content, *One Battle After Another* weaves heavy themes together in an emblematic narrative about a family fractured by persecution, fighting to stay together.

As modern times feel increasingly like a slow descent into the past, this film brings some light to the despotic darkness, showing us that the fight for progress, the fight against tyranny and towards a true revolution, is simply one battle after another.

UNPACKING ISRAEL'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE

Selling Israel: Zionism, Propaganda, and the Uses of Hasbara
By Harriet Malinowitz
Olive Branch Press/Interlink Publishing Group, $25, 373 pages

By Eleanor J. Bader

Retired English professor Harriet Malinowitz spent 20 years writing and researching *Selling Israel*, and the exhaustively detailed result probes the ways Zionist mythology has been packaged to prop up support for the Jewish state.

She starts by introducing the concept of hasbara, which, she writes, can be "bluntly described as propaganda, but in fact comprises a huge network of government ministries, nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit agencies and charities, campus organizations, volunteer groups, watchdog bodies, professional associations, media networks, fundraising operations, and educational programs that aim to fortify a Zionist-defined notion of Jewishness in persons within Israel, the United States, and other countries."

Malinowitz's text deconstructs the ways these entities have been used to support Israel as a place essential to Jewish safety and security. But in addition, she includes the country's foundational reliance on Biblical history, horrific 19th-century Eastern European pogroms, and the Nazi Holocaust to buttress its claims that Israel is a necessary bulwark against anti-semitism.

Let's start with the Bible. Malinowitz writes that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, frequently said that "the bible is our mandate." Similarly, in 1947 Chaim Weitzman, Israel's first president, told the United Nations that, "God made a promise: Palestine to the Jews." Seventy-two years later, in 2019, Danny Danon, Israel's then ambassador to the UN, reiterated this message, holding up a Bible and telling his audience that the book is Israel's "deed" to the land, evidence of an "everlasting covenant" with God.

Logic assumes that this claim has been questioned, but for the most part, it has not been.

And those pesky Palestinians who'd been living on that land? For years, most Zionists denied their existence and repeatedly stated that the land was both empty of people and nonarable, claims that were easily refuted since European nations that had long imported Palestinian barley, sesame, wheat, and Jaffa oranges. As Lebanese historian Marwan R. Buheiry wrote, "Palestine had always been an important producer of key agricultural commodities and was experiencing a significant expansion of agriculture and allied manufactures at least two generations before the arrival of the first colons from East Europe."

Malinowitz argues that Zionists knew this, but consciously chose to tell a tall tale about "a land without people for a people without land." This idea was supported by two additional, if contradictory, notions: That the indigenous population of Palestine could be "transferred" to a host of Arab nations and/or that those who remained in Palestine would benefit from "Zionist accomplishments."

The fact that many Palestinians saw the situation differently was unsurprising. Indeed, several Jewish writers and theorists had foreseen Palestinian resistance, but they were ignored or condemned as wrongheaded.

Instead, the Jewish National Fund, a group created in 1901 when Zionism was little more than the fledgling dream of a small percentage of world Jewry, began to raise funds to "transfer Palestinian Arabs to Iraq, Syria, and even Transjordan."

ROMAN BROSZKOWSKI

ENTITLED: *Israel supporters at a protest in South Brooklyn.*

Their mission has never wavered, although it has expanded. Among its many efforts, the JNF has solicited donations for community development, with projects to "green the desert" and "drain festering swamps" to make more of the country suitable for farming.

Malinowitz reports that neither effort has panned out as planned. The 1950 draining of Hula Lake, she writes, is just one example. Although drainage was meant to redeem the land for agriculture and turn "water that had been a menace to health into a blessing," it has instead caused environmental calamity. "Among the casualties in the Hula Valley," she explains, "were the disappearance of 119 animal species, the extinction of numerous fresh water plant species, the rerouting of migratory birds flying between Europe and Africa, and the — unanticipated population explosion of the vole, which rampantly destroyed crops and led many to cease farming there — in turn accelerating soil deterioration." And the greening of the desert? The desire to create a "garden oasis" led Israelis to plant Aleppo pine and cypress trees, rather than trees native to the area. These trees have obliterated grasslands. Moreover, since the natural habitat of the Aleppo pine is wetter, "when planted in arid areas they require intense irrigation to facilitate sapling growth and suffer major, irreparable losses during droughts. Yet neither blunder has dissuaded the Jewish National Fund from working to garner support for these projects. What's more, they continue to raise money to "strengthen Israel's peripheral regions."

Educational efforts are, of course, key to these initiatives, both within and outside of Israel. The use and misuse of the Holocaust come into play here. For several decades after World War II, Malinowitz writes that Nazi death camps were rarely invoked because Israeli leaders felt that the annihilation of six million Jews could be read as a sign of weakness, as if the victims had somehow allowed themselves to be led to their deaths, like "lambs to the slaughter." This began to change during the 1961 trial of high-ranking Nazi, Adolf Eichmann. As world revulsion to Nazi ideology mounted, Israel's leaders began an ideological pivot, now arguing that "an armed Jewish state was both essential for preventing an ever-looming second Holocaust and would have mitigated the first one." Images of gun-toting Israeli soldiers became a source of national — and international — pride that dovetailed with constant rhetoric to dehumanize Palestinians as an unprovoked, menacing threat.

This is where hasbara has been most effective.

Since the 1970s, hasbara has presented Israel as a rugged, innovative, and pioneering nation where queer identity is respected, environmental sustainability is championed, and Jews are able to live in safety, security, and prosperity. That these claims are specious has not mattered to Israel's supporters, Malinowitz writes. As Gaza is pummeled into oblivion and the West Bank is increasingly occupied by people eager to eliminate every Palestinian person, peace seems less and less possible. It's both sad and appalling.

Worse, in the more than two years since October 7th, the conflation between Judaism and Zionism has ramped up. Efforts to decouple them remain ongoing, but *Selling Israel* provides both the hard facts and historical background necessary to contest Zionism as the best and only way to combat hatred of Jews. In parsing Zionism's 19th-century roots and the heinous pogroms the movement was responding to, Malinowitz has given readers ammunition for fighting anti-Semitic bigotry. It's a vitally important book.

A TASTE OF AFFORDABILITY

BEAN & CHEESE BURRITOS

FEEDS: **10 burritos**
COOKING TIME: **45 minutes**

By John Morris

As the city celebrates a successful election and hopefully begins an era of badly-needed reform and progress, it's important to remember that life doesn't stop for celebrations and exultations. Life requires us to pack lunches and cook dinners even when all we have the energy to do is microwave something.

These make-ahead bean and cheese burritos are perfect for the work week and are just as good warmed up in the microwave as they are reheated in a pan. That is, if you can resist eating them as soon as you make them. All you need for this one is 45 minutes, a can opener, and a pan. I made this recipe with a camp stove on the ledge of the Grand Canyon using ingredients I found in a store called "The Shack" so I have no doubt you'll be able to make this at home. I have faith in you, dear reader.

JOHN MORRIS

INGREDIENTS

- *Two cans Refried Beans ~$5.00*
- *One bunch Scallions ~$1.49*
- *One can Hatch Green Chilis ~$2.59*
- *One can Rotel Diced Tomatoes ~$1.29*
- *One packet Taco Seasoning ~$1.00 (You could also just go ahead and buy Cumin, Paprika, Garlic Powder, and Chili Powder and make your own but I figured I'd provide an easier alternative. A good spice cabinet is worth the investment, however.)*
- *One packet 10-inch Tortillas ~$3.00*
- *One packet shredded Monterey-Jack Cheese ~$4.00 (You can really use whatever kind of cheese you'd like for this. So long as it melts)*
- *Canola Oil, about 3oz ~$.11*

DIRECTIONS

1. *Dice your scallions and add them to a pan over medium heat with a little bit of oil. Once they start to sizzle and soften, add chilis, tomatoes, and seasoning, along with a good pinch of salt.*
2. *Sauté this mixture until it is well-combined and somewhat reduced, about 5 minutes. Add beans and cook for an additional 2 minutes, or until everything is hot. Taste and season to your liking. Remove from the pan and keep warm.*
3. *In a clean pan, warm your tortillas for a couple of seconds to soften them.*
4. *Add a handful of your shredded cheese to each tortilla and top with a spoonful of your bean mixture. Start with a small spoonful and add more once every tortilla has seen some love. You don't wanna run out of beans and cheese before your tortillas do.*
5. *Roll those tortillas into little burritos and fry the folded side first until golden brown. Flip, repeat, and remove from the heat.*

Like a good deli sandwich, these should be individually wrapped in parchment paper and then aluminum foil before being placed in the freezer. I would also recommend placing them in a bag to prevent freezer-burn, but if you're strapped for cash, all you need is the foil. These burritos will last a couple months in the freezer or a few days in the fridge.

REVEREND BILLY'S REVELATIONS

RICHARD SWAFFORD

Dear Rev,
I'm getting more and more worried about AI. Millions of people are losing their jobs. Real art is replaced with slop. We're not able to know what's real and what is fake. The AI data centers use up enormous sums of energy and water. And more and more people are claiming to be in romantic relationships with their Chatbots. Where are we going?

— JACK, Brooklyn

Dear Jack,
I am an AI robot myself. But I'll still answer your questions because we have no shame, can't be embarrassed — part of why we're taking over the culture.

Not funny. Well — AI feels like the last step in the Wall Street profittaking strategy, which is to survive with wealth by relentless growth, even though the earth is finite. Anything that accelerates that growth — which right now is large-scale speed ups of our brain functions — is money-making, craved like a suicidal religion.

And I say "last step" because we are 29 months into a global heatwave which is causing mass extinction, and this has been consciously financed by Big Oil/Wall Street. These players know full well that to keep up this overproduction and overconsumption is to kill the habitable planet.

They are simulating our lives, to sell to us the life that we already have, while killing our ability to survive. We're going into debt to buy back our own lives. They will sell us a second planet, an inferior simulation of the Earth.

Their artificial intelligence eats up our spiritual space, so that where we had the unknowable Earth to ponder, giving an enchanting stream of questions...We now have an endless product line. Our imaginations will no longer have room to offer ourselves unexpected dreams, the ultimate nourishment.

We will buy our way, product by product, to this second Earth. Don't they know that we will still be on the original Earth's surface, regardless of how sexy they can make the copy of our lives? The world's most valuable companies are basically big copy machines.

Zohran Mamdani's community of 100,000 campaign volunteers embarked on the simple physical magic of face-to-face talking and listening about the things our physical lives share: food and shelter. Looking into each others' eyes, holding the screen door open, taking the fact sheet and touching our fingers of a stranger as we shake hands — is the taking back of our place, our neighborhood and our planet. A common sense is born from that intimacy. A radical urgency is born from that intimacy.

We always knew that there would come a time when we would have to save ourselves from robots. The Earth is our power. We have the infinitely more fascinating life of our bodies in this larger body called the Earth.

Earthalujah!
BILLY

REVEREND BILLY TALEN IS THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING. HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE REVEREND?EMAIL REVBILLY@REVBILLY.COM AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL.

Theater for the New City

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER EVENTS

CONNOLY
by Stefan Diethelm
NOV 6-23
THURS to SAT @ 8pm
SUN @ 3PM

SCARED MONSTERS
by Devorah Shubowitz
NOV 6-23
THURS to SAT @ 8pm
SUN @ 3PM

THE POPES OF FARRAGUT STREET
by Melanie Maria Goodreaux
NOV 6-23
THURS to SAT @ 8pm
SUN @ 3PM

ROME NEAL'S BANANA PUDDIN' JAZZ
NOV 24
@7PM

WHO PUT BELLA IN THE WYCH ELM
by Emerson Mae Smith
NOV 28-DEC 14
THURS to SAT @ 8pm
SUN @ 3PM

BREAD + PUPPET
DEC. 3RD-14TH
THURS to SAT @ 8pm
SAT. & SUN @ 3PM

KILLING MRS. CLAUS
by Peter Zachari
DEC. 4TH-21ST
THURS. to SAT. @ 8pm
SUN. @ 3PM

BEAUTY BITES
by Terry Lee King
DEC. 18TH-JAN. 4TH
THURS. to SAT. @ 8pm
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